Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Working paper on the Southeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone submitted by the ASEAN Member States (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam)

1. One of the yardsticks for measuring progress towards the full implementation of the NPT is the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. ASEAN has always been supportive of the concept of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States in the regions concerned. ASEAN firmly believes that the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zones is an effective measure of geographical limitation of nuclear proliferation, and contributes to the twin goals of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It further contributes towards strengthening the security of the States in the zone and to enhancing peace and security in a collective manner. ASEAN is therefore happy to learn of the gradual increase in number of States covered by the umbrella of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, which now exceeded 110 States.

2. It is worth recalling here the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, which stated inter alia that the cooperation of all the nuclear weapon States and their respect and support for the relevant protocols is important for the maximum effectiveness of the nuclear weapon-free zone treaty and its relevant protocols. In this regard, ASEAN wishes to emphasize the paramount importance of providing assurances by the nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to all States of the zones.

3. ASEAN wishes to recall once again that it has established a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Southeast Asia (SEANWFZ) by Bangkok Treaty, which entered into force since 27 March 1997. As a key component of Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), SEANWFZ Treaty expresses determination of ASEAN to contribute towards general and complete nuclear disarmament and the promotion of international peace and security. It also aims to protect the region from environmental pollution and the hazards posed by radioactive waste and other toxic materials.

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4. ASEAN has put in place the SEANWFZ Commission and its Executive Committee to oversee effective implementation of the provisions of the Treaty and ensure compliance with them. ASEAN welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the Treaty. However, the Protocol to the Treaty is yet to be acceded to by the nuclear weapons States. For SEANWFZ to be fully operational and effective, it is essential that the nuclear weapons States accede to the Protocol at an early date. In this regard, ASEAN is happy that China has already reached agreement with ASEAN on the SEANWFZ and its protocol. ASEAN is also pleased to note that significant progress has been made in the accession of nuclear weapon States to the relevant protocols to other nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. ASEAN encourages their earliest accession to the protocol to Bangkok Treaty as well.

5. To this end, ASEAN has been holding direct consultations with the five nuclear weapon States on their terms of accession to the protocol, which lays down their commitments under the Treaty. Although there are still a few outstanding issues, ASEAN considers these on-going consultations as steps in the right direction towards winning the respect and support of the nuclear weapon States for the Zone by their earliest accession to the Protocol to the Treaty.